

INTERROGATION OF LEE HARVEY OSWALD

We conducted the investigation at the Texas School Book Depository Building on November 22, 1963, immediately after the President was shot and after we had found the location where Lee Harvey Oswald had done the shooting from and left three empty cartridge cases on the floor and the rifle had been found partially hidden under some boxes near the back stairway. These pieces of evidence were protected until the Crime Lab could get pictures and make a search for fingerprints. After Lt. Day, of the Crime Lab, had finished his work with the rifle, I picked it up and found that it had a cartridge in the chamber, which I ejected. About this time some officer came to me and told me that Mr. Roy S. Truly wanted to see me, as one of his men had left the building. I had talked to Mr. Truly previously, and at that time he thought everyone was accounted for who worked in the building. Mr. Truly then came with another officer and told me that a Lee Harvey Oswald had left the building. I asked if he had an address where this man lived, and he told me that he did, that it was in Irving at 2515 W. 5th Street.

I then left the rest of the search of the building with Chief Lumpkin and other officers who were there and told Det. R. M. Sims and E. L. Boyd to accompany me to the City Hall where we could make a quick check for police record and any other information of value, and we would then go to Irving, Texas, in an effort to apprehend this man. While I was in the building, I was told that Officer J. D. Tippit had been shot in Oak Cliff.

Page 2

Immediately after I reached my office, I asked the officers who had brought in a prisoner from the Tippitt shooting who the man was who shot the officer. They told me his name was Lee Harvey Oswald, and I replied that that was our suspect in the President's killing. I instructed the officers to bring this man into the office after talking to the officers for a few minutes in the presence of Officers E. M. Sims and E. L. Poyd of the Homicide Bureau and possibly some Secret Service men. Just as I had started questioning this man, I received a call from Gordon Shanklin, Agent in Charge of the FBI office here in Dallas, who asked me to let him talk to Jim Bookhout, one of his agents. He told Mr. Bookhout that he would like for James P. Hosty to sit in on this interview as he knew about these people and had been investigating them before. I invited Mr. Bookhout and Mr. Hosty in to help with the interview.

After some questions about this man's full name I asked him if he worked for the Texas School Book Depository, and he told me he did. I asked him which floor he worked on, and he said usually on the second floor but sometimes his work took him to all the different floors. I asked him what part of the building he was in at the time the President was shot, and he said that he was having his lunch about that time on the first floor. Mr. Truly had told me that one of the police officers had stopped this man immediately after the shooting somewhere near the back stairway, so I asked Oswald where he was when the police officer stopped him. He said he was on the second floor drinking a coca cola when the officer came in. I asked him why he left the building, and he said there was so much excitement he didn't think there would be any more work done that day, and

Page 3

that as this company wasn't particular about their hours, that they did not punch a clock, and that he thought it would be just as well that he left for the rest of the afternoon. I asked him if he owned a rifle, and he said that he did not. He said that he had seen one at the building a few days ago, and that Mr. Truly and some of the employees were looking at it. I asked him where he went to when he left work, and he told me that he had a room on 1026 North Beckley, that he went over there and changed his trousers and got his pistol and went to the picture show. I asked him why he carried his pistol, and he remarked, "You know how boys do when they have a gun, they just carry it."

Mr. Hosty asked Oswald if he had been in Russia. He told him, "Yes, he had been in Russia three years." He asked him if he had written to the Russian Embassy, and he said he had. This man became very upset and arrogant with Agent Hosty when he questioned him and accused him of accosting his wife two different times. When Agent Hosty attempted to talk to this man, he would hit his fist on the desk. I asked Oswald what he meant by accosting his wife when he was talking to Mr. Hosty. He said Mr. Hosty mistreated his wife two different times when he talked with her, practically accosted her. Mr. Hosty also asked Oswald if he had been to Mexico City, which he denied. During this interview he told me that he had gone to school in New York and in Fort Worth, Texas, that after going into the Marines, finished his high school education. I asked him if he won any medals for rifle shooting in the Marines. He said he won the usual medals.

I asked him what his political beliefs were, and he said he had none but that he belonged to the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and told me that

Page 4

they had headquarters in New York and that he had been Secretary for this organization in New Orleans when he lived there. He also said that he supported the Castro Revolution. One of the officers had told me that he had rented the room on Beckley under the name of W. E. Lee. I asked him why he did this. He said the landlady did it. She didn't understand his name correctly.

Oswald asked if he was allowed an attorney and I told him he could have any attorney he liked, and that the telephone would be available to him up in the jail and he could call anyone he wished. I believe it was during this interview that he first expressed a desire to talk to Mr. Abt, an attorney in New York. Interviews on this day were interrupted by showups where witnesses identified Oswald positively as the man who killed Officer Tippit, and the time that I would have to talk to another witness or to some of the officers. One of these showups was held at 4:35 pm and the next one at 6:30 pm. and at 7:55 pm. At 7:05 pm I signed a complaint before Bill Alexander of the District Attorney's office, charging Oswald with the Tippit murder. At 7:10 pm Tippit was arraigned before Judge Johnston. During the second day interviews I asked Oswald about a card that he had in his purse showing that he belonged to the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, which he admitted was his. I asked him about another identification card in his pocket bearing the name of Alex Hidell. He said he picked up that name in New Orleans while working in the Fair Play for Cuba organization. He said he spoke Russian, that he corresponded with people in Russia, and that he received newspapers from Russia.

Page 5

I showed the rifle to Marina Oswald, and she could not positively identify it, but said that it looked like the rifle that her husband had and that he had been keeping it in the garage at Mrs. Paine's home in Irving. After this, I questioned Oswald further about the rifle, but he denied owning a rifle at all, and said that he did have a small rifle some years past. I asked him if he owned a rifle in Russia, and he said, "You know you can't buy a rifle in Russia, you can only buy shotguns." "I had a shotgun in Russia and hunted some while there." Marina Oswald had told me that she thought her husband might have brought the rifle from New Orleans, which he denied. He told me that he had some things stored in a garage at Mrs. Paine's home in Irving and that he had a few personal effects at his room on Beckley. I instructed the officers to make a thorough search of both of these places.

After reviewing all of the evidence pertaining to the killing of President Kennedy before District Attorney Henry Wade and his assistant, Bill Alexander, and Jim Allen, former First Assistant District Attorney of Dallas County, I signed a complaint before the District Attorney charging Oswald with the murder of President Kennedy. This was at 11:26 pm. He was arraigned before Judge David Johnston at 1:35 am, November 23, 1963.

Oswald was placed in jail about 12:00 midnight and brought from the jail for arraignment before Judge David Johnston at 1:36 am.

On November 23 at 10:25 AM Oswald was brought from the jail for an interview. Present at this time was FBI agent Jim Bookhout, Forrest Sorrells, special agent and in charge of Secret Service, United States Marshall Robert Nash, and Homicide officers. During this interview I talked to Oswald about his leaving the building, and he told me he left by bus and rode to a stop near home and walked on to his house. At the time of Oswald's arrest he had a bus transfer in his pocket. He admitted this was given to him by the bus driver when he rode the bus after leaving the building.

One of the officers had told me that a cab driver, William Wayne Whaley, thought he had recognized Oswald's picture as the man who had gotten in his cab near the bus station and rode to Beckley Avenue. I asked Oswald if he had ridden a cab on that day, and he said, "Yes, I did ride in the cab. The bus I got on near where I work got into heavy traffic and was traveling too slow, and I got off and caught a cab." I asked him about his conversation with the cab driver, and he said he remembered that when he got in the cab a lady came up who also wanted a cab, and he told Oswald to tell the lady to "take another cab".

We found from the investigation the day before that when Oswald left home, he was carrying a long package. He usually went to see his wife of week ends, but this time he had gone on Thursday night. I asked him if he had told Buell Wesley Frazier why he had gone home a different night, and if he had told him anything about bringing back some curtain rods. He denied it.

During this conversation he told me he reached his home by cab and changed both his shirt and trousers before going to the show. He

said his cab fare home was 85 cents. When asked what he did with his clothing, he took off when he got home, he said he put them in the dirty clothes. In talking with him further about his location at the time the President was killed, he said he ate lunch with some of the colored boys who worked with him. One of them was called "Junior" and the other one was a little short man whose name he did not know. He said he had a cheese sandwich and some fruit and that was the only package he had brought with him to work and denied that he had brought the long package described by Mr. Frazier and his sister.

I asked him why he lived in a room, while his wife lived in Irving. He said Mrs. Paine, the lady his wife lived with, was learning Russian, that his wife needed help with the young baby, and that it made a nice arrangement for both of them. He said he didn't know Mr. Paine very well, but Mr. Paine and his wife, he thought, were separated a great deal of the time. He said he owned no car, but that the Paines have two cars, and told that in the garage at the Paine's home he had some sea bags that had a lot of his personal belongings, that he had left them there after coming back from New Orleans in September.

He said he had a brother, Robert, who lived in Fort Worth. We later found that this brother lived in Denton. He said the Paines were close friends of his.

I asked him if he belonged to the Communist Party, but he said that he had never had a card, but repeated that he belonged to the Fair Play for Cuba organization, and he said that he belonged to the American

Page 8

Civil Liberties Union and paid \$5.00 dues. I asked him again why he carried the pistol to the show. He refused to answer questions about the pistol. He did tell me, however, that he had bought it several months before in Fort Worth, Texas.

I noted that in questioning him that he did answer very quickly, and I asked him if he had ever been questioned before, and he told me that he had. He was questioned one time for a long time by the FBI after he had returned from Russia. He said they used different methods, they tried the hard and soft, and the buddy method, and said he was very familiar with interrogation. He reminded me that he did not have to answer any questions at all until he talked to his attorney, and I told him again that he could have an attorney any time he wished. He said he didn't have money to pay for a phone call to Mr. Abt. I told him to call "collect", if he liked, to use the jail phone or that he could have another attorney if he wished. He said he didn't want another attorney, ~~he~~ wanted to talk to this attorney first. I believe he made this call later as he thanked me later during one of our interviews for allowing him the use of the telephone. I explained to him that all prisoners were allowed to use the telephone. I asked him why he wanted Mr. Abt, instead of some available attorney. He told me he didn't know Mr. Abt personally, but that he was familiar with a case where Mr. Abt defended some people for a violation of the Smith Act, and that if he didn't get Mr. Abt, that he felt sure the American Civil Liberties Union would furnish him a lawyer. He explained to me that this organization helped people who needed attorneys and weren't able to get them.

137 - D

Page 9

While in New Orleans, he lived at 6907 Magazine Street and at one time worked for the William Riley Company near that address. When asked about any previous arrests, he told me that he had had a little trouble while working with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and had a fight with some anti-Castro people. He also told me of a debate on some radio station in New Orleans where he debated with some anti-Castro people.

I asked him what he thought of President Kennedy and his family, and he said he didn't have any views on the President. He said, "I like the President's family very well. I have my own views about national policies." I asked him about a polygraph test. He told me he had refused a polygraph test with the FBI, and he certainly wouldn't take one at this time. Both Mr. Bookhout, of the FBI, and Mr. Kelley, and the Marshall asked Oswald some questions during this interview.

Oswald was placed back in jail at 11:33 am. At 12:35 pm Oswald was brought to the office for another interview with Inspector Kelley and some of the other officers and myself. I talked to Oswald about the different places he had lived in Dallas in an effort to find where he was living when the picture was made of him holding a rifle which looked to be the same rifle we had recovered. This picture showed to be taken near a stairway with many identifying things in the back yard. He told me about one of the places where he had lived.

Mr. Faine had told me about where Oswald lived on Neely Street. Oswald was very evasive about this location. We found later that this was the place where the picture was made. I again asked him about his property

Page 10

and where his things might be kept, and he told me about the things at Mrs. Paine's residence and a few things on Beckley. He was placed back in jail at 1:10 PM.

At 6:00 PM I instructed the officers to bring Oswald back into the office, and in the presence of Jim Bookhout, Homicide officers, and Inspector Kelley, of the Secret Service, I showed Oswald an enlarged picture of him holding a rifle and wearing a pistol. This picture had been enlarged by our Crime Lab from a picture found in the garage at Mrs. Paine's home. He said the picture was not his, that the face was his face, but that this picture had been made by someone superimposing his face, the other part of the picture was not him at all and that he had never seen the picture before. When I told him that the picture was recovered from Mrs. Paine's garage, he said that picture had never been in his possession; and I explained to him that it was an enlargement of the small picture obtained in the search. At that time I showed him the smaller picture. He denied ever seeing that picture and said that he knew all about photography, that he had done a lot of work in photography himself, that the small picture was a reduced picture of the large picture, and had been made by some person unknown to him. He further stated that since he had been photographed here at the City Hall and that people had been taking his picture while being transferred from my office to the jail door that someone had been able to get a picture of his face and that with that, they had made this picture. He told me that he understood photography real well, and that in time, he would

B. H. H. H.

Page 11

be able to show that it was not his picture, and that it had been made by someone else. At this time he said that he did not want to answer any more questions and he was returned to the jail about 7:15 pm.

At 9:30 on the morning of November 24, I asked that Oswald be brought to the office. At that time I showed him a map of the City of Dallas which had been recovered in the search of his room on North Beckley. This map had some markings on it, one of which was about where the President was shot. He said that the map had nothing to do with the President's shooting and again, as he had one in the previous interviews, denied knowing anything of the shooting of the President, or of the shooting of Officer Tippit. He said the map had been used to locate buildings where he had gone to talk to people about employment.

Gas. Holmes - Bonds - Book out.
During this interview Inspector Kelley asked Oswald about his religious views, and he replied that he didn't agree with all the philosophies on religion. He seemed evasive with Inspector Kelley about how he felt about religion, and I asked him if he believed in a God. He was evasive and didn't answer this question.

Someone of the Federal officers asked Oswald if he thought Cuba would be better off since the President was assassinated. To this he replied that he felt that since the President was killed that someone else would take his place, perhaps Vice-President Johnson, and that his views would probably be largely the same as those of President Kennedy.

I again asked him about the gun and about the picture of him holding a similar rifle, and at that time he again positively

Page 12

denied having any knowledge of the picture or the rifle and denied that he had ever lived on Neely Street, and when I told him that friends who visited him there said that he lived there, he said they were mistaken about visiting him there, because he had never lived there.

During this interview Oswald said he was a Marxist, but not a Leninist Marxist, and repeated this two or three times. He said that the station that he had debated on in New Orleans was Bill Stake's program. He denied again knowing a A. Hidell in New Orleans, and again reiterated his belief in Fair Play for Cuba and for what the Committee stood for.

After some questioning, Chief Jesse L. Curry came to the office and asked if I was not ready for this man to be transferred. I told him we were ready as soon as the security was complete in the basement where we were to place Oswald in a car to transfer him to the County Jail. I had objected to the large cameras obstructing the jail door, and the Chief explained to me that these had been moved and that the people were moved back across the street and the cameras were well back in the garage. I told the Chief we were ready. He told us to go ahead and that he and Chief Stevenson, who was with him, would meet us at the County Jail.

Oswald's shirt which he was wearing at the time of arrest had been removed, and sent to the Crime Lab in Washington with all the other evidence for the comparison tests, and he said he would like to have a shirt from his clothing that had been brought to the

138-D

Page 13

office to wear over the T-shirt that he was wearing at the time. We selected the best-looking shirt from his things, but he said he would prefer wearing a black Ivy League type shirt, indicating that it might be a little warmer. We made this change and I asked him if he wouldn't like to wear a hat to more or less camouflage his looks in the car while being transferred as all of the people who had been viewing him had seen him bareheaded. He didn't want to do this. Then Officer J. R. Leavelle handcuffed his left hand to Oswald's right hand, then we left the office for the transfer.

Inasmuch as this report was made from rough notes and memory, it is entirely possible that one of these questions could be in a separate interview from the one indicated in this report. He was interviewed under the most adverse conditions in my office which is 9 feet 6 inches by 14 feet, and has only one front door, which forced us to move this prisoner through hundreds of people each time he was carried from my office to the jail door, some 20 feet, during each of these transfers. The crowd would attempt to jam around him, shouting questions and many containing elurs. This office is also surrounded by large glass windows, and there were many officers working next to these windows. I have no recorder in this office and was unable to record the interview. I was interrupted many times during these interviews to step from the office to talk to another witness or secure additional information from officers needed for the interrogation.